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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 029272

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#)  
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE TO UN OFFICIALS ON SRI LANKA

REF: A. A) COLOMBO 308  
    B. B) COLOMBO 339  
    C. C) BLAKE/DICARLO 3/26/09 EMAIL

Classified By: IO AA/S James B. Warlick for reason 1.4(b).

11. This is an action message. See para. 2.

OBJECTIVES  
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2.(C) The Department instructs USUN to pursue the following objectives with UN officials with regard to the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka:

-- Urge UN Secretary General (SYG) Ban Ki-Moon to issue a statement calling on the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) to implement a humanitarian pause to allow civilians to evacuate the conflict zone.

-- Encourage Ban to announce the return of SYG,s Special Representative for the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kaelin. (Note: Kaelin has already discussed this possibility with the Sri Lankan government and high-level Sri Lankan government officials have expressed a willingness to permit a visit.)

-- Explore with appropriate UN officials (likely U/S for Humanitarian Affairs Holmes) the possibility of the UN naming a dedicated envoy to convince the LTTE to open the conflict zone in order to conduct a survey of civilians and to ensure the safe passage of those who wish to leave. (Note: A special envoy would not engage in political negotiations between the LTTE and GoSL but would merely negotiate the release of civilians.)

BACKGROUND  
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13. (C) As detailed in reftels, the GoSL's advance against the LTTE in northern Sri Lanka has confined the LTTE to an area of less than 30 square km, with the Sri Lankan Government continuing to make gains. Our immediate concern is the safety of the estimated 150,000-180,000 internally displaced persons who are trapped in a Sri Lankan Government-designated "safe zone" within LTTE territory.

14. (C) The LTTE reportedly continues to fire on civilians attempting to leave the area, in an attempt to forcibly recruit people of all ages, and is launching military operations from the safe zone. The LTTE leadership falsely claims that no civilians wish to leave the safe zone and that the IDP facilities in Vavuniya amount to "concentration camps." With the GoSL under pressure to enter the safe zone to finish off the LTTE once and for all, we believe a concerted UN effort to guarantee the safety of the affected Sri Lankan civilians may be the only way to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.

CLINTON